

A SHORT HISTORY



of the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union

By A. AFONIN

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A Short History of the
Young Communist League
of the Soviet Union

BY
A. A. FOMIN



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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE OF THE SOVIET UNION

1. *The Young Communist League—Militant Aid of the Bolshevik Party*

On October 29, 1918, the foundation of the Communist youth movement was laid and the Young Communist League inaugurated at its first All-Union Congress. Since then membership has grown from 22,100 to 4,547,186. Of this enormous number 1,432,593 are collective farmers.

During these fifteen years, the Young Communist League has fought unwaveringly for the general line of the Party and has actively participated in socialist construction on all fronts.

In his greetings on the Tenth Anniversary of the Young Communist League, Comrade Stalin wrote:

"The Leninist Young Communist League has always been, and still remains, the young reserve of our revolution. Tens and hundreds of thousands of the best representatives of the rising generation of workers and peasants have been trained in the ranks of the Young Communist League, have been handed the revolutionary torch and have come into our Party, our soviets, our trade unions, our Red Army, our Red Navy, our co-operatives, into all our cultural organizations, to replace the old guard of Bolsheviks.

"The Young Communist League was able to cope with this difficult task because it carried on its work under the guidance of the Party, because it was able to combine its general and Leninist education with its daily practical work, because it knew how to educate the rising generation of workers and peasants, both men and women, in the spirit of internationalism, because it was able to find a common tongue for all Leninists, old and young, because it knew how to base all its work on the interests of the proletarian dictatorship and the victory of socialist construction.

"It is for these reasons alone that the Young Communist League has been able to hold high the banner of Lenin."

During the battles on the October barricades, on all fronts of the Civil War and in socialist construction, the Leninist Young Communist League has grown and steeled itself. In the words of the resolution of the Seventh Conference of the League:

"In the struggle for the Five-Year Plan in four years, in the building of socialism, the five million army of the Young Communist League, having made the historic turn towards economic construction and guided by the directives of the Bolshevik Party, has done its utmost to increase, and is increasing still more, its part in socialist construction. It wages a heroic struggle for the building and utilization of the industrial giants of the Five-Year Plan. It has mastered and continues to master new industries and by its shock work and initiative is crowning with success the cause of socialist competition. The League sends out thousands of Young Communists to master the farthest regions of the U.S.S.R., trains new cadres and fights for universal literacy and socialist culture. It has always been, and still is, the chief aid of the Party in liquidating the kulaks as a class on the basis of all-round collectivization.

"The Leninist Young Communist League has become the school for the many-sided activities of the state, the shock brigade for the building of socialism, the militant aid of the Leninist Party."

The history of the Leninist Young Communist League is indissolubly bound up with that of our proletarian revolution, and of our Party, so that the study of its Bolshevik development is of enormous educational importance for Young Communists.

During its fifteen years of militant work under the guidance of the Leninist Party, the Young Communist League has written many glorious pages in the history of proletarian revolution.

2. Young Workers and Peasants under Tsarism

The young workers had no mass youth organization of their own before the February Revolution of 1917. They directed all their class-conscious forces into the general

struggle of the adult proletarians against capitalist slavery and autocracy.

The young workers lived in conditions resembling those of prison labour. The capitalists took advantage of the cheap labour of the youth and exploited hundreds of thousands of young men and women, forcing them to work from ten to twelve hours a day and even more. Apprentices attached to handicraft enterprises had to work as many as sixteen hours a day.

The following is a description given by a factory inspector of the life of the young workers in tsarist Russia: They went into the factory at the age of seven or eight; sometimes even at six. There was a twelve-hour working day with frequent overtime work. The children often fell asleep at their work, resulting in injuries and even death. In Moscow Province in 1878, out of 172 accidents among the workers, 108—or 68 per cent—were among children. Their wages were quite insignificant—ninetenths of it going on food alone.

Conditions of labour in the small handicraft enterprises were especially hard, as is shown by the following description given by a group of handicraft workers and apprentices:

“We live as though we were deprived of all rights. We receive just what the masters choose to pay us—a ruble or a ruble fifty a month—and we are expected to drink this away in their company. The food is such that a good master would be ashamed to throw it to his dogs.”

There was no protection whatsoever for children and adolescents working in industry. They worked until they were completely exhausted, and their natural span of life was considerably curtailed. Living in dark barracks, sleeping on plank beds unwashed for years on end, skin diseases and epidemics frequently broke out among them.

Voyevodin, himself a young worker, in his statement in court in connection with the case of the May Day demon-

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWSCOUNTDOWN

strations (in Saratov, November 4-7, 1902), characterized the position thus:

"... Hungry, cold and suffering all kinds of privations, importunately searching for work and always losing it because of police persecutions, constantly experiencing the insults of the gendarmes and other servants of the tsarist government, I began to understand for the first time, at the age of sixteen, that my sufferings were only a part of the common misery and oppression which is the lot of the working masses as a whole, that our enemies are the capitalists who squeeze out our life blood and the tsarist government, which is entirely on the side of the capitalists and prevents us from fighting in our own interests. There was nothing left for me and the rest of the working class to do but to come out on the streets and cry: 'Down with the capitalists, down with autocracy!' I only fulfilled my duty when I took part in the demonstrations. . . ."

The crushing of the 1905 Revolution meant increased exploitation of the working class, especially of the young workers. The miserable labour legislation of the tsarist government was totally unobserved and those laws which existed did not so much limit the use of the labour of young people as help to exploit it.

Comrade Petrovsky, Bolshevik Deputy to the State Duma (now President of the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee as well as one of the Presidents of the C.E.C. of the U.S.S.R.), clearly portrayed the conditions of the young workers in the mining industry of the day, in one of his speeches delivered at the State Duma.

"Children of seven and eight years are working in the Krivoi Rog district. Almost 80 per cent of the children working in the mines are sick. Their appearance is dejected, oppressed; their faces are lined from the super-human labour they perform; their bodies deformed. The children, like their elders, work from five in the morning to six o'clock at night, without stopping. For the slightest cessation of work, for the most insignificant offence the child is fined. More often than not the children have to work underground, in the low, narrow galleries, where their heads almost touch the roof, doubling themselves to drag the tubs, overtaxing their strength and straining their muscles. . . ." If the children sorting the coal. . . . "work slowly, they are fined and punished by the head miner or foreman, and even dismissed from work.

"The children's wages are extremely low: they get from twenty to forty kopecks a day; those sorting coal get from thirty kopecks upwards and those who clean the coal earn only fourteen kopecks a day. Even under favourable circumstances, the average wage never exceeds five rubles a month. For the most part these children are orphans, brought from distant parts of Russia or from the central provinces of Orel, Tula, Kharkov. They live with the adults in earth caves or barracks, for which they have to pay five to six rubles monthly into the board and lodging fund. If they have not enough money to pay this amount, the miners contribute the necessary amount.

"At the Providence Works there was an escape from one of the steam pipes and it was obvious to the workers that some disaster was inevitable. The boiler near these pipes was cleaned by boys. One day the pipe burst and five apprentices were scalded, two of them fatally. Of course no responsibility was borne by the bosses, to whom the life of a worker is hardly worth a kopeck.

"Bosses get huge profits but the parents are given hardly any compensation for the sacrifice of their children to this same Providence."

The young workers, subjected to incredible exploitation, rose in revolt to improve their conditions. They took a most active part in the strike movement which swept the country in 1912-14. The majority of their demands were included in the general demands of the workers, who gave them full support. But there were also independent activities and numerous strikes of the young workers in many towns in the most varied enterprises—the workers wholeheartedly supporting the youth.

The position of the young peasants employed in agriculture in old tsarist Russia was in no way better than that of the young workers; on the contrary the young agricultural labourers were even more oppressed and exploited.

Crushed by tsarist taxation, the peasant farm labourer sent his children to work on the kulak and landlord farms at an early age. The use of agricultural machinery increased the demand for child labour. The cheap labour of the children served also to supplant that of adult workers. In *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*,

Lenin gives the following examples of the use of child labour in agriculture:

"The horse-thresher, used with four to eight horses, requires fourteen to twenty-three or more labourers, of whom half are women and young boys, *i.e.*, semi-labourers. . . .* The eight to ten horse power steam-thresher, which is to be found on all big farms (Kherson province), requires fifty to seventy persons to work on it at a time, of whom half consist of semi-labourers—young boys and girls between the ages of twelve and seventeen."

Not infrequently, they worked for clothing and board alone under terrible living conditions. Their lot was exhausting work of sixteen to eighteen hours a day, poor food and a low wage. In the Kiev province for example it was from ten kopeks a day in winter, twelve in spring, fifteen in summer and twelve in autumn—such was the lot of the young farmhand toiling for the landowner.

The young workers and peasants marched side by side with the vanguard of adult workers in all their demonstrations, in their strike movements, and in armed uprisings against the landlords and capitalists.

Lenin considered it of enormous importance to have the young workers in the revolutionary movement. In his article "Penal Servitude Regulations and Penal Servitude Sentences" Lenin says:

"The memory of these heroes and comrades killed and tortured in prison will increase the strength of the new fighters tenfold. It will rouse thousands of helpers to come to their aid and, like the eighteen-year-old Martha Yakovleva, they will openly say: 'We stand by our brothers!'"**

The young workers and peasants showed exemplary courage and heroism during the 1905 Revolution.

* In this sense meaning semi-able-bodied.—*Ed.*

**Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, Book I, "Penal Servitude Regulations and Penal Servitude Sentences," p. 307. Martha Yakovleva was a young working woman from the Obukhov works and one of the accused at the trial that followed a demonstration held by the workers of the Obukhov factory on May 7, 1901.

In the summer of that year, in Felzevo, a village in the Tver province "it was holiday time, a day of festival known as 'Yarilo.'* About two hundred young people were walking through the streets in a crowd. Soon singing broke out: 'Down with war, down with the tsar, down with the tyrant hangman.' The crowd left leaflets behind them and many who had revolvers fired."

In his article entitled "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising" of September 11, 1906, Lenin quotes an example of heroism on the part of the young working women:

"On October 23 in the Pressnya district two young working girls carrying a red banner in a crowd of ten thousand, rushed forward to meet the Cossacks with cries of: 'Kill us! We won't give up the banner alive!' The Cossacks were dismayed and rode away followed by cries of: 'Long live the Cossacks!'"

Such examples of courage and heroism should be indelibly inscribed in the consciousness of the proletariat forever.

3. Lenin and Stalin, the True Friends and Leaders of the Young Communist League.

Unlike the parties of the Second International, the Bolshevik Party has always paid great attention to work among the youth and clearly defined their tasks in the revolutionary struggle.

As early as the Second Party Congress in 1903, Lenin devoted special attention to the revolutionary movement of the university students.

In the resolution he proposed to the Congress, he emphasized that the tasks of the youth are:

"First and foremost, to bring to the forefront of their activities the developing among their members of a complete and consistent revolutionary outlook, serious understanding of Marxism, on the one hand, and, on the other, of Russian . . . and Western

* Yarilo—Slavonic god, embodiment of the fertile power of the spring sun. The holiday was celebrated with singing and dancing.

European opportunism, as the main currents in the chief contending tendencies today;

"Secondly, to warn the youth against those false friends who draw them away from serious revolutionary education by empty revolutionary phrases or idealistic phraseology and philistine complaints of the harm and futility of any sharp and heated discussions among the revolutionary and oppositionist elements. These false friends in actual practice only spread unprincipledness and a frivolous attitude to revolutionary work;

"Thirdly, when embarking on practical activities to try to establish contacts in advance with the revolutionary Social-Democratic organizations, in order to have the benefit of their directives and avoid as far as possible *making big mistakes in the early stages of the work.*"

This resolution shows how important the Bolsheviks, headed by Lenin, considered the struggle for the youth to be, but it should be noted that the second point proposed by Lenin, on "False Friends," was violently opposed by Martov and Trotsky.

In opposition to the reformists, Lenin insisted that the Young Communists should be organizationally independent.

". . . We must insist unconditionally upon the organizational independence of the Young Communist League," wrote Lenin in 1916, "not only because the opportunists are afraid of this independence, but because of its underlying significance.

"For without complete independence, the youth will be unable to train good socialists from among themselves, or prepare themselves to advance the cause of socialism. For complete independence of the youth leagues, but, also with full freedom of comradely criticism of their mistakes.

"We must not flatter the youth!"

Lenin's attitude on the question of "young workers' leagues" was also in sharp opposition to the Trotskyist policy of flattering the youth, of making advances to them, of setting them in opposition to the whole Party, of considering the young students as the "Party's barometer." Lenin was for organizational independence, but also for criticism of mistakes, for Party guidance of the young workers' organizations, so that the fighting tradi-

tions and revolutionary experience of the older generation might be handed down to the youth.

Fourteen years after the Second Congress, when the mass youth movement was launched, the young revolutionary workers, under the guidance of the Party, successfully fought a determined struggle against their false friends. Later on, the Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union found it necessary once more to fight against their "false friends" under the guidance of the Leninist Central Committee and its leader Comrade Stalin. Some of these false friends advised the Communist youth to observe "neutrality," that is, not to support the Party leadership in its struggle against Trotskyism and its allies, against all anti-Leninist deviations and oppositions. Others advocated the theory of "equal rights" for the Young Communist League and the Party, in this way setting the youth in opposition to the Party, but the Young Communist League determinedly resisted both.

In his speech at the Plenum of October 29, 1933, devoted to the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union, Comrade Kaganovich said that

"The efforts of the Trotskyists and Right opportunists, by means of flattery, to set the youth against the old guard, to turn the youth from the right road, to break them up into little groups, have suffered defeat. The Young Communist League has remained true to the line of the Leninist Party, it has worked under the guidance of the Party which never flattered the youth, but always educated it in the spirit of Bolshevik self-criticism. The Party has led the youth, together with the whole of the proletariat, to the storming of capitalism, to the uprooting of the very foundations of capitalism, to the overcoming of difficulties and to the socialist transformation of our country. The youth are following the Party today, and are fighting self-sacrificingly to realize the Party's general line. . . .

"The strength of the Young Communist League lies in that it works under the constant guidance of the Bolshevik Party, under the guidance of its old guard, under the guidance of the leaders

of the international proletariat—Lenin and Stalin. . . . Lenin and Stalin have shown the greatest care and concern for the Young Communist League. Stalin, more than anyone else today systematically concerns himself with the problems of the Young Communist movement, follows its development and the growing requirements of the youth with the utmost care and affection. Stalin is the best friend and leader of the Young Communist League.”

On the outbreak of the imperialist war all the Social-Democratic parties of the Second International played a base and treacherous role in calling for the defence of their “own fatherlands.”

The Bolsheviks alone, headed by Lenin, raised the correct revolutionary slogans: to convert the imperialist war into civil war, to organize a new, a third, International. The international revolutionary position taken up by the Bolsheviks again met with the strong support of the young workers. It was during this period that the working youth developed very rapidly politically. Young workers’ circles sprang up in the big industrial centres of Russia.

At the Putilov Works in St. Petersburg there were two such circles led by a young worker and Party member, V. Alexeyev, who, after February, became one of the leaders and organizers of the Petrograd Young Communists.

At the Prechistensky evening courses in Moscow, revolutionary propaganda was carried on under guise of classes in the Russian language, geography and natural sciences.

There were also revolutionary socialist circles for young workers in Nikolayev, Odessa, Kremenchuk and other towns.

Many comrades, who at that time carried on work in the circles, became leaders of the Young Communists after the February Revolution. Thus, the advanced section of the young workers, constantly in touch with the

working class and led by Party organizations, prepared for the mass revolutionary movement of the toiling youth.

4. February to October

The February Revolution was a strong impetus to the development of the young workers' movement. By May 1917, in the factories and workshops of Leningrad (then Petrograd), Moscow, the Urals, Ukraine and several of the other large industrial centres, youth organizations had sprung up. Their aim was to develop the political activity of the young workers, their class consciousness and their struggle for political rights, and to improve their economic position (increase in wages, shorter working hours, etc.). The growth of political activity found expression in the fight for the franchise. Comrade Ryvkin, one of the organizers of the Leningrad Young Communist League, in his outline of the history of the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union, writes:

"In order to calm the masses, the government began preparations for elections to the Constituent Assembly. The question was discussed in all kinds of commissions and other bodies as to who had the right to participate in the elections. At the same time the elections to the town dumas had begun. The government, in which the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries participated, decided that only persons over twenty years of age could vote. The Constitutional Democrats [Cadets] wanted the age limit placed at twenty-three. Thus a considerable part of the young workers and peasants were denied the vote and the right to any political life. The tactics of the Mensheviks in this respect are of interest. They brought in an amendment, and that only after the Bolsheviks had begun a campaign on the question, demanding that soldiers from the age of eighteen should have the right to vote. Thus young women and the youth not in the army, were deprived of the suffrage even under the Menshevik amendment.

"The struggle for the franchise was one of the points around which the movement of the working youth was developed and organized, and which determined its attitude towards the parties. Of all the parties existing at the time, only the Bolsheviks put forward the demand for the franchise at the age of eighteen. This increased the sympathy which the young workers already felt towards the Bolsheviks.

"The Bolshevik Party turned the question of the young workers' suffrage into a big political issue. The young workers published a whole series of appeals in the *Pravda* and issued slogans demanding the suffrage. They appealed to the young people to organize, to unite, and to begin a joint struggle for their political rights.

"Why did the bourgeoisie refuse the youth the right to vote? Because it was afraid of their revolutionary outlook. And so the bourgeois party—the Constitutional Democrats—insisted on election rights being granted only from the age of twenty-three. It is for this reason that in no bourgeois country is the suffrage granted at eighteen years. This right only exists here, in the Soviet republic."

It should be noted that the February Revolution brought no improvement in the economic and political position of the young workers. Again the only party that defended their interests was the Bolshevik Party.

The central organ of the Bolsheviks—*Pravda*—during the period between the February and October Revolutions, published a whole series of articles devoted to the economic conditions of the working youth. In one of these articles (April 16 [29], 1917) Comrade Krupskaya wrote:

"Our near ones, our husbands and brothers, are perishing in the war being waged by England, Russia, France, Germany and Austria in the interests of the capitalists. Their places at the benches in factory and workshop have been taken by women and juvenile workers. Thirsting for profits, capitalism does not spare the undeveloped strength of our children. Working men and women know how the number of adolescents employed in workshops and factories has increased during the war, how their constitutions are undermined, the awful conditions under which they have to live, often spending the night without a roof over their heads, dragging themselves from coffee-shop to coffee-shop. . . . We must put an end to this criminal waste of energy of the growing generation; we cannot for a moment postpone this work."

It was the immediate task of the workers to protect child and juvenile labour.

Thus, in the struggle for the suffrage and for improving their economic position, the young workers turned more and more towards Bolshevism.

When the mass proletarian youth movement was being launched in one of the biggest centres, Petrograd, the bourgeoisie and its agents the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries attempted to gain the leadership. Shevtsov, a student with liberal and Cadet inclinations, found his way into the youth organization known as "Labour and Light," and tried to lead it under slogans of "non-party," "self-education," "non-participation in politics," and so on. Naturally, such an organization was extremely popular among the bourgeoisie; for example, Nobel, (a factory owner and incidentally also one of the most arrant interventionists) subsidized it.

But the bourgeoisie and the reformists did not succeed in leading the revolutionary youth movement astray. The falsity of their slogans was soon exposed by the young workers themselves and their class instinct became stronger. On the basis of the struggle for the suffrage, the Socialist Young Workers' League was formed in Petrograd. Guided by the Bolsheviks, the League immediately took the right road, the road of sharp struggle against the "Labour and Light" organizations. This League, as well as the Moscow Young Workers' League, had a great influence on the nature and form of the majority of youth leagues organized in all the big centres.

On August 18 [31], 1917, the committee of the new organization convened a general town conference of the working youth, which was hailed with great enthusiasm. The conference declared the dissolution of the "Labour and Light" organization and the inauguration of the Socialist Young Workers' League. At the time of the October Revolution, the membership of the League was about twenty thousand, with nuclei in all the big factories. The movement was of a mass character. It was a proletarian movement under the guidance of the Bolsheviks.

The decision of the Sixth Congress of the Party, held in Petrograd in August 1917, played an important role in the work of the young workers' leagues and in their further development throughout the whole of Russia. The Congress took place under semi-legal conditions, and, in the absence of Lenin who was in hiding, was led by Comrade Stalin. A report was made on the youth leagues and a special decision taken to the effect that

"Since the early days of revolution there has been a broad movement of young workers in many Russian towns, and especially in Petrograd, which aims at creating independent proletarian organizations of young working men and women. The Russian bourgeoisie, like the Western European bourgeoisie, understands full well the enormous importance of the growing generation of the working class for the whole trend of development of the class struggle; the bourgeoisie therefore is trying, and some attempts have already been made, to use these organizations for the purpose of imbuing their own bourgeois ideology into the young proletarians . . . for the purpose of drawing away the young workers, if only for a time, from active participation in the economic and political struggle of the working class. The Party of the proletariat, in its turn, bears in mind the enormous importance of the working youth for the working class movement as a whole.

"The Congress therefore considers it essential for the local Party organizations to pay the most serious attention to the work of organizing the youth . . . with a view to ensuring from the very beginning the socialist character of these organizations, that the future Socialist Young Workers' League of Russia be affiliated to the Youth International, and that its local sections aim primarily at developing the class consciousness of the proletarian youth, by socialist propaganda, by energetic struggle against chauvinism and militarism, and the simultaneous defence of the economic and political interests of young working men and women.

"Now that the struggle of the working class is passing into the phase of direct struggle for socialism, the Congress considers one of the urgent tasks of the moment to be the creation of class socialist organizations of the working youth, and it lays upon all Party organizations the duty of giving the utmost attention to this work."

The Sixth Congress of the Party also decided to arrange courses for training instructors to organize and lead the youth leagues.

A considerable part in the development of the Moscow organization and the other youth leagues in the Moscow province was played by the "Third International" Young Workers' League. This league sprang up in the Zamoskvoretsky district of Moscow. A group of young reserves, attached to the Zamoskvoretsky District Party Committee, formed in 1916, was its embryo.

And here again, at the very source of the movement, the Party of Bolsheviks gave it guidance. From March 1917, leagues were organized in the Zamoskvoretsky factories (at Michelson's factory and later at the Bromley works, the Gustave List works, and so on). By July the movement was already a mass one; it acquired the name of the "Third International" Young Workers' League. It had about one thousand members with nuclei in many factories. Naming the league "Third International" clearly showed the link between the young workers and Lenin and his Party. The League actively fought against the Mensheviks and helped the Party in its work. Its members distributed manifestoes and literature. They agitated in the streets, formed shock groups at meetings and, as far as they could, supported Party speakers. Members of the League joined the local Red Guard.

From the end of April, organizing of "Third International" Young Workers' Leagues began in other districts: Hamovniki (now Frunze), Krassnaya Pressnya and elsewhere.

In July, on the initiative of certain students and workers who had come from the underground circles, a league of youth was organized, attached to the Moscow Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks). From two to three hundred young workers joined. It was not a mass organization, but it did a great deal of work in drawing together the forces which later were sent to the districts to help develop a mass movement of the working youth. The work of the league at

that time was intensive. It gave great assistance to the Party at elections to the town and district dumas. During the elections to the town duma, in June 1917, the league fought under general Party slogans.

The First Moscow Conference of the "Third International" Young Workers' League was held on October 8, 1917. By this time, leagues had been organized in eighteen districts. The Conference discussed the report of the Moscow organizational committee, the statutes, the co-report on the current situation and the question of demonstration.

After long discussion the Conference passed the League's statutes demanding the establishment of the League as a mass organization and emphasizing its Bolshevik fighting character. A resolution was passed on the current situation calling for preparation for armed uprising. This decision, taken two weeks before the October Revolution, was in accordance with the instructions of the Party Central Committee and of Lenin, and conformed with the line of the Sixth Party Congress.

In response to the appeal of the International Bureau of Socialist Leagues, the newly elected Moscow Committee organized a demonstration against war on October 15, which was followed by a meeting of about 5,000 young workers on Skobelev Square (now Soviet Square). Representatives of the Moscow Party Committee and Moscow Soviet took part. The following resolution was passed:

"We demand that the All-Russian Congress of Soviets immediately take over the reins of power and take steps to establish an immediate truce on all fronts and to conclude a universal democratic peace."

This demonstration, from the political point of view, signified that the young workers of Russia had taken the road towards organizing a revolutionary youth international. On the day of this demonstration the first youth magazine, *Youth International* was issued.

5. *The Battle for October*

The period following the Sixth Bolshevik Party Congress was one of growth of the proletarian youth movement and of preparation for the October struggles. The working youth swelled the ranks of the Red Guard and received their militant baptism on the October barricades.

The Party and Lenin considered it of extreme importance that the working youth participate in the detachments of the Red Guard. On the eve of the October Revolution, Lenin, in a letter on organizing the uprising, wrote:

"Combine our three main forces: the fleet, the workers and the army units, so as surely to occupy and hold *no matter what the cost*: a) the telephone exchange; b) the main telegraph office; c) the railroad stations; d) and above all the bridges. Pick the most resolute elements (our 'shock elements' and the *young workers*, and also the best sailors) into small detachments to occupy all the most important points and to participate everywhere in all the important operations."

Having justified the confidence of their leader, the young workers honourably fulfilled the tasks entrusted to them by the Party.

According to certain statistics there were about five thousand persons between the ages of fifteen and twenty-three in the Red Guard of Petrograd, that is, approximately 40 per cent. Many of them were in the detachments which occupied the most important points on the night of November 7.

When the Red Guard of the Vyborg District marched against the Winter Palace and drove out the *Junkers*, there was a great number of young people among the armed workers.

After the storming of the Palace, the ranks of the Red

Guard were swelled still more by young workers. The Petrograd Committee of the Socialist Young Workers' League organized groups of young revolutionaries in almost all districts and sent them into the Red Guard.

In the Vyborg district, in order to unify the detachments of the Red Army, the first marching battalion was formed, commanded by Comrade Vorobyev.

In the Moscow infantry reserve regiment, recruits were enlisted in the Red Guard, and the young workers volunteered in hundreds.

In Moscow, where the armed forces of the *Junkers* offered desperate resistance to the revolution, the young workers obtained weapons for the Red Guard, organized the scouting, and supplied brave fighters for the barricades. The young workers actively participated in the taking of the Kremlin.

In the Urals, in Sverdlovsk, the detachment of the Red Guard attached to the "Third International" Socialist Young Workers' League took part in the disarming of the bourgeoisie, and during the October Revolution fulfilled brilliantly the military task, set by the Central Headquarters of the Red Guard, of occupying the posts and telegraphs of the town.

In Odessa, the youth league actively assisted in occupying government institutions, munition stores, artillery and infantry schools, and at the same time carried on a heroic struggle against the whiteguards and counter-revolutionary Cossack bands.

In Rostov-on-Don the young workers threw themselves heart and soul into the forming of Red Guard detachments, and, side by side with the adult workers, heroically repulsed the attack of the enemy for seven days.

Thus, during the historic days of 1917, the young workers fought for the October victory.

6. *Towards an All-Union Organization*

The October Revolution radically altered the position of the young workers and peasants. On October 29 [November 11], 1917, the workers' and peasants' government decreed that children under fourteen years of age were not to be employed and persons under eighteen years were not to work more than six hours per day. In this way, the basis was laid for the socialist organization of youth labour.

After the October Revolution, the whole attention of the youth leagues was concentrated on strengthening the dictatorship of the proletariat and defending it from international and Russian counter-revolution.

The best forces of the leagues were naturally sent to the civil war front and this, at first, retarded the further establishment and growth of the league.

Because of the difficulties caused by the evacuation of Petrograd then beginning, the close proximity of the front and stoppages in industry, the Leske anarcho-syndicalist group grew up in the Petrograd organization. This was an expression of the pressure being brought to bear by petty-bourgeois elements and of the influence of hostile class elements on certain strata of the young workers.

This group tried to liquidate the league as a mass organization and to form a new league composed of individual active workers in the league.

This group demanded the formation of a narrow organization under slogans such as "the sixteen thousand (league members) hinder the active workers," "there is no need to elect (the leading organs) by general vote, but only to choose leaders on the basis of personal recommendation," "only thinkers can be revolutionaries."

This attempt to split the youth movement met with no sympathy among the organizations and suffered outright defeat.

During the period of dispute in the Party over the Brest peace, the majority of young worker organizations supported the Leninist position of concluding peace. The "respite" which came as a result of the Brest peace, gave the league an opportunity to strengthen.

In spring of 1918, many organizations began to raise the question of calling an all-Russian congress of the youth leagues. On April 9, the Young Workers' League of Kaluga, at one of its general meetings, called for the holding of an all-Russian, or at least a provincial, congress of the young workers' leagues in the near future in Moscow. Here the fundamental questions of their work would be made clear.

The emergency conference called in Petrograd in June 1918 decided at all costs to call an all-Russian congress. A similar decision was arrived at in Moscow. Provincial conferences took place in many of the big centres—in the Urals, Voronezh, Vladimir, Ufa, Rybinsk, Yekaterinodar, Saratov, Kursk, Kaluga, and Tambov. Many of the largest leagues began to publish their own newspapers.

By the autumn and winter of 1918, the upsurge of revolution had brought about the growth of the revolutionary organizations of the young peasants as well. Two things were of particular importance in the birth and development of the leagues of peasant youth: the tours made by a section of the young workers (especially from Petrograd) to the villages, and the return to the villages of demobilized young soldiers who in the majority of cases organized nuclei in the rural districts.

In this way the leagues in rural districts were able to launch considerable cultural and educational work; they became drawn into political struggles, and with all the enthusiasm of youth began to build a new life.

The decisions of the preliminary conferences emphasized that although the creative organizational work of the youth had been great, the absence of a common program and statutes was causing confusion and retarding the growth of the leagues.

On the initiative of the Petrograd, Moscow and Ural organizations, an organizational bureau for convening the First Congress was formed. The major part of the work of convening the Congress had to be done by the Moscow organization. Comrades were sent into the localities and special instructional material circulated. In the numbers of the *Youth International* (which afterwards became the organ of the Central Committee of the League) and in the Petrograd *Young Proletarian*, special articles were devoted to the Congress. The organizational bureau issued the following appeal to the youth:

"The movement is growing throughout Soviet Russia. The young workers' and peasants' leagues, having broken the chains of the past, are instinctively finding the road which will lead to a brighter future. We have shaken off the age-long nightmare which oppressed us and our hearts are filled with pride at the thought that youth has been able to rise to the occasion.

"The revolutionary enthusiasm which seized the youth with the first outbreak of revolution has helped them to find their friends in the struggle for socialism.

"We did not go side by side with those who advocated 'submissiveness and conciliation.' We are fighters. We do not fear the storm. There is no middle course for us, only one road to socialism. . . .

"A year ago the Swiss youth called upon us to make common cause with them in their struggle against militarism and, in reply, the youth of Moscow organized a great demonstration against the world blood bath. The more often appeals of this kind are made, the more must we brace our forces for the coming of the day of the Red Youth International. The road to the International lies through an all-Russian organization. The question of the day is the All-Russian Congress.

"Comrades, there is one cause which is dear to us—the building of a new life, the life and freedom of emancipated labour:

"We hold in our hands all the possibilities of the future, the guarantee of our success, and we must take part in this cause. . . .

"Our aspirations can only be realized through the All-Russian Congress. Comrades, we call upon you to make greater efforts; the

All-Russian Congress must be the beginning of organized work on an all-Russian scale. Propagate the idea of the Congress, prepare for it!

"The key to success lies in our unity, in our solidarity."

As can be seen, the appeal not only set the task of achieving unity on an all-Russian scale, but also of organizing a youth international.

7. Founding of the Young Communist League

The First Congress of the Young Communist League took place in Moscow from October 29 to November 4, 1918. There were 176 delegates present representing the 22,100 members.

The political composition of the Congress was: eighty-eight Communists, thirty-eight Communist sympathizers, forty-five non-Party, one Left Socialist-Revolutionary, one anarcho-individualist, three social-democratic internationalists. The largest number of delegates came from the Moscow, Petrograd, Central Black Soil Region and Ural organizations.

The Congress heard the following reports: from the locals on the work of the leagues; on cultural and educational work; Comrade Yaroslavsky on the current situation; Comrade Yusefovich on the youth movement in the West. The Congress discussed the statutes of the league, received greetings from the German youth, from Karl Liebknecht and from the Finnish Young Communist League.

The speakers from the locals stated that the youth movement had become extensive, but was suffering from lack of organizers. Party organizations in the localities still gave insufficient help and the majority of leagues worked without any funds. At the same time all the organizations emphasized their readiness at any moment to give all their forces to defend the conquests of October.

This Congress laid the foundation of the Communist youth movement and united the local organizations.

There were two outstanding points of view on what the league should be called. Some considered that the name should be the Young Communist League. This was the proposal of the Moscow and Petrograd organizations. Others considered it should be the "Third International" Young Workers' Socialist League. In proposing this, the comrades felt that the word "Communist" would scare away the working masses, especially the young peasantry. This opinion was rejected by the Congress, and the League was named the Russian Young Communist League.

The Ural delegates also proposed the organizing of "young proletarian clubs." These clubs were to embrace all the young workers and be a mass form of stepping stone to the league. The Congress rejected this proposal, considering that the masses of young workers should be attracted directly into the Young Communist League, which would work under the guidance of the Party.

The three fundamental principles accepted by the Congress were: 1) the League makes common cause with the Communist Party, aims at spreading the ideas of Communism and bringing the young workers and peasants into the active building up of Soviet Russia; 2) the League is an independent organization, working under the guidance of the Communist Party; 3) the League is called the Russian Young Communist League.

The Congress emphasized the role of the League as the vanguard of the international proletarian youth movement, which aims at the creation of a Young Communist International.

Lenin gave tremendous assistance to the work of the Congress. A delegation was sent from the Congress to him. He listened to them with great attention and gave them a great deal of advice.

Comrade Bezymensky,* a delegate to the First Congress describes this conversation as follows, in his reminiscences:

"Tzetlin proudly informed Lenin that the Congress had decided to call the league, Communist.

"'It is not a question of the name,' interjected Ilyich.

"'But we shall justify the name,' burst out Yefim.

"Comrade Lenin smiled in reply. He asked us what the membership of the League was, the composition of the Congress, the class composition of the members of the organizations.

"'Be cautious where the intellectuals are concerned,' he advised.

"'How many girls are there at the Congress?' asked Ilyich, turning to Gerr.

"'Here I could no longer remain silent.

"'Nine altogether,' I blurted out.

"Everybody laughed. And Gerr under cover of Dugachev shook his fist menacingly at me.

"There were many more business-like questions put by Comrade Lenin. He advised us to make contacts with the West, promised to let the future Central Committee have magazines published by the youth abroad.

"'And what about funds?'

"'Plans have been made for raising funds, but there are none on hand at present.'

"Comrade Lenin wrote something down on a piece of paper.

"'Give that to Sverdlov,' said he.

"We rose, said goodbye and left the room, warmed by the mighty heart of the great man.

"He was the first to offer us the hand of spiritual and material assistance. He understood the mighty aspirations of the youth."

The Congress passed a historic resolution on the current situation. On the central and most important question of defending the conquests of the October Revolution, it unanimously declared:

"This First Congress of the Russian revolutionary youth, having heard the report on the current situation, expresses its complete solidarity with the workers' and peasants' government in its struggle for communism. World counter-revolution now growing in the south, will meet with effective resistance from us. We will give all our revolutionary fire, all our young strength to the struggle against it. Our voices ring across the earth rallying to our banner

* Alexander Bezymensky—proletarian poet, one of the founders of the Russian Y.C.L.

the revolutionary youth of the whole world. The last, decisive battle is approaching. Not a step backwards! Long live the coming revolution! Long live the Third International! Long live the Soviet government!"

8. Mobilize for the Defence of the Republic

During the period of Civil War, the Young Communist organization subordinated its work to the main task of helping the Soviet country, under the guidance of the Bolshevik Party, defend the conquests of the working class.

The delegates to the First Congress especially emphasized this in their speeches. Here are a few of the remarks made.

Comrade Golikov (Moscow Province): "The Narofo-minsk League has organized universal military training."

Comrade Classovsky (Kiev) informed the Congress that the League was collecting weapons and organizing detachments for the fight against counter-revolution. "We managed to hide 115 rifles and a few field guns. In the detachment formed, many were League members," he said.

Comrade Khasan (Ural region): "When the uprising broke out in the Urals, it was answered by almost all the youth. Detachments were organized everywhere and, in some parts, whole league organizations joined up. This was how the youth of the Urals answered the call to defend the revolution. They even went from the regional committee. . . . They went to fight against Dutov and other whiteguard generals."

Comrade Babushkin (Vladimir province): "In the work of the Kovrov league of youth, major emphasis was laid on military training. When counter-revolution broke out in Murom, a rocket was sent up as a signal, and the Kovrov league of youth immediately hurried to Murom. Kazan was taken by a Vladimir detachment in

which there were many league members, almost all of whom were killed."

The years 1918, 1919 and 1920 should be written in the hearts of every young worker and peasant as years in which the toiling youth of the Soviet country performed miracles of bravery and endurance. There was not a single factory or village, that did not give up its best sons to fight on the front. They went as recruits to the courses for Red commanders, for militant work in the organs of the Cheka and for the food detachments. There was not a single organization of the Young Communist League during those years that did not send its members into the ranks of the fighting revolutionary army.

In reply to the appeal of the Party and the Soviet government for all to rally to the defence of the republic, the Central Committee of the Russian Young Communist League, on May 10, 1919, declared the first all-Russian mobilization of young Communists for the Eastern front. In the appeal to local organizations, the Central Committee of the Russian Young Communist League made the following proposals:

- "1. . . . To undertake immediately energetic steps to explain to the broad masses of young workers and peasants the menacing state of affairs on the Eastern front and to assist in the successful carrying out of local mobilization.
- "2. To pay serious attention to the work among young Red Army men.
- "3. To introduce immediately universal military training in all localities for all League members capable of bearing arms.
- "4. To select responsible workers for despatch to the courses organized for commanders and to the Eastern front for organizational and agitational work.
- "5. Organizations in the fighting area should mobilize 20 per cent of their League membership and put them at the disposal of the local Party Committees.
- "6. While despatching League members to the front, it is proposed that the necessary number of workers be left to carry on the work."

The mobilization met with a warm response not only from the Young Communist organizations in the fighting area. Moscow and Petrograd set an example by giving all their best forces to the front.

"Forward, to support the front!" was the slogan.

"Meetings were held in all the Moscow districts. They were not ordinary recruiting meetings. Everybody understood what was required and all were prepared to go wherever they might be sent. News of the mobilization was received with great enthusiasm; every district gave, on an average, thirty men. It was not at all difficult to collect them. There were many more ready to go. Among the volunteers almost half were from the active members of the organizations.

"On the following day the mobilized Young Communists gathered together in their districts in full military formation and from there marched to the Moscow committee. A few hours later a detachment of three hundred Young Communists set out for the front." (*To the Front and At the Front*, a symposium).

This is a typical picture of the times.

Instead of sending 105 men, Petrograd sent 800 to the front. It was the same in other important organizations: in Nizhni-Novgorod, Viatka, Penza, Tsaritsin, Kursk, Tver, Ryazan, etc. Kursk even declared all its League members militarized. All above sixteen years of age were mobilized in military detachments and put at the disposal of the Party committee.

In spite of the enormous difficulties, the devastation and the broken-down economy, the Young Communist organizations flourished. Led by the Bolshevik Party, they grew and were steeled in the fight. At the time of the First Congress (October 1918), the League membership was 22,100, by 1919 it was already 100,000, and by the beginning of 1920 it had grown to 400,000 members. It should not be forgotten that to be a member meant to be ready to leave at a moment's notice for the front, rifle in hand, to defend the revolution.

At the moment of greatest danger for the Soviet Union, October 5-8, 1919, when Kolchak was advancing in the

east and Denikin was leading his offensive from the south, the Second Congress of the League was convened. Four hundred and twenty-nine delegates attended the Congress, representing 96,000 members. The Denikin offensive made it impossible to carry on the work of the Congress normally, many delegates having to leave for the front.

The Eighth Congress of the Communist Party (March 1919) passed a special resolution on the work of the Young Communist League. This resolution was one of the fundamental Party documents for the work of the newly formed Young Communist League, and guaranteed its further development consolidation.. The Eighth Congress resolution ran:

"I. The proletarian revolution constantly demands new responsible workers and class-conscious fighters. It is for the younger generation of the working class and of the poorest peasantry to take an ever more active part in revolutionary construction and to prepare itself to continue and deepen the revolution. The fate of the revolution depends to a considerable extent upon the successful fulfilment of this task.

"II. Party work among the young workers and peasants is at the present time of vital importance. The Party must have behind it well trained reserves, from which it can draw its new workers, honest and class-conscious, imbued with revolutionary enthusiasm.

"III. Communist work among the youth can be carried on successfully only through independent organizations, marching under the banner of communism, in which the youth are able to carry out the maximum independent activities which, undoubtedly, are essential to its communist education. The Young Communist League is an organization of this kind, accomplishing the enormous work of organizing the Communist education of the youth, calling upon the proletarian youth for the direct building of communist society and to the defence of the Soviet republic.

"IV. The Eighth Congress of the Party considers the continued existence and development of the Young Communist League to be essential. The Party should afford the most active ideological and material support to the League."

After this decision had been taken a detailed statement was drawn up on the relationship which should

exist between the League and the Party, the main points of which were:

I. The Young Communist League is an independent organization.

II. It shall recognize the program and tactics of the Party.

III. It shall work under the direct ideological leadership of the Party, having its own League statutes.

In these two documents the main task of the Young Communist League as a mass organization working under the guidance of the Party was formulated. These decisions of the Eighth Congress also played a big role in the elaboration of the rules of the League.

Dunayevsky, who was the leader of the so-called youth syndicalism opposition, tried to mislead the youth by advancing such slogans as the organizing of soviets of young workers, thus separating them from the adult proletarians and distorting the principles of the class struggle. The opposition also demanded the creation of youth sections in the trade unions which apparently were to defend the interests of the "toiling youth of Russia" but which could, of course, only retard the growth and consolidation of the trade union movement as a whole. Adoption of such proposals would have led to the League being converted into a narrow sectarian organization; to "isolating the youth from the fulfilment of the common tasks of struggle of the proletariat"; to separating them into a special Party organization; to putting the youth in opposition to the adult proletarian cadres; to an incorrect conception of the relations which should exist between the Young Communist League and the Party, and to an incorrect view of the position of the Young Communist League under the dictatorship of the proletariat. All this was nothing but a peculiar expression "of Leftism, of the pseudo-revolutionary moods which

were current during that period of revolution." (Kosarev.)

These manifestations of "youth syndicalism" failed to meet with any sympathy among the mass membership of the Russian Young Communist League; they were rapidly exposed and crushed.

The League Congress also brought in a decision on work among national minorities and work in rural districts. The attention of the Congress was, however, focussed on the front and on the internal situation. The resolution on the current situation ran as follows:

"The position at the front is serious. Denikin is marching on the centre of Soviet Russia—on Tula and Moscow. He is already prepared to celebrate his victory over proletarian Russia. But the joy of the bourgeoisie is premature. The Mamontov and Mironov adventures have proved better than anything else that the peasantry are becoming more and more hostile to counter-revolution and are flocking to the Soviet government, recognizing it as the only defender of the toiling people.

"By straining our forces to the utmost, both in the Red rear and at the front, Denikin, like every counter-revolutionary will suffer his last, devastating blow. Having in mind the existing situation of the Soviet republic, the Second All-Russian Congress resolves:

"1. To mobilize League members from the age of sixteen for the defence of the republic and for service at the front and in the rear of the Red Army.

"2. To mobilize to the following extent:

a) total mobilisation in those organizations which exist within the fortified zone of the southern front—Orel, Tula, Voronezh, Tambov, Ryazan, Kaluga and Moscow provinces.

b) thirty per cent of the League membership over the age of sixteen to be mobilized in the remaining organizations."

In its mobilization appeal to the youth dated October 9, 1919 the Central Committee of the Young Communist League wrote:

"We will give all our best and most class-conscious comrades for defence of the revolution and service at the front and the rear of the Red Army. We will show that the spirit of a class-conscious workers' and peasants' youth is alive in Russia and is ready to enter the struggle. . . ."

A year later, at the Third Young Communist Congress, the Central Committee was able to declare in its report that "the mobilization was carried out brilliantly, ten thousand League members being mobilized. Hardly any one refused and in the majority of cases the quota was made up exclusively of volunteers. The mobilization took place so rapidly that the decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party published after the Congress, to reduce the mobilization from 35 per cent to 20 per cent, could not be put into operation.

Mention must also be made of the prominent part played by the Young Communist League in recruiting to the courses for Red Commanders, and in placing hundreds of Young Communists in volunteer detachments, and in detachments for combating desertion.

The Young Communist League greatly assisted the Party organizations working underground in territories occupied by the Whites—in the Urals, the Caucasus and Siberia. Here are a few examples:

By order of the Military Department of the Party Committee in Odessa, the League organized a militant troop which carried on scout work and pasted up proclamations.

The Young Communists did not spare themselves. They performed miracles of heroism and many perished in the cause of revolution.

This is the kind of treatment meted out to Young Communists in Nikolayev when caught doing underground work by General Slashchev:

"All the insults and tortures inflicted by the bestial whiteguards were useless. With superhuman strength of will, the comrades restrained themselves from crying out, and refused to answer any of the questions put to them. The trial went on for two days ending in a sentence of death for nine comrades. The condemned remained calm and firm. Before their death, they sent a letter in which they wrote: 'Nine Communists, condemned to death on January 4, 1920 by court-martial at the whiteguard headquarters of Odessa send farewell greetings to their comrades. We hope you will carry on

our common work with success. We go to meet our death, but we triumph and greet the victorious advance of the Red Army. We hope and believe in the final victory of the ideals of Communism.

“‘Long Live the Red Army!

“‘Long Live the Communist International!

“‘Condemned: Dora Lyubarskaya, Ida Krasnochekina, Yasha Roifnen, Lev Litvak, Boris Mikhailovich, Dunovsky, Vassily Petrenko, Misha Paltsman and Paula Bark.’”

And here again Orlov (Gladchenko) in his Short History of the Russian Young Communist League tells how the Young Communists of the Crimean organization died:

“For three weeks the Young Communists were tortured to make them reveal the names and addresses of the Party and League workers still at large. But it was in vain; the Young Communists remained true to their revolutionary oath. The court brought in the previously prepared verdict: nine comrades were to be hanged; and four to serve an indefinite term at hard labour. On May 15, 1920, at four o'clock in the morning, those sentenced to death were brought into the prison yard and strung up in turn onto the lamp-posts. And even then they were tortured. Dying, with the ropes round their necks, the comrades were let down to the ground, allowed to regain their breath and strung up again.”

But in spite of the cruelty, the shootings and hangings, the floggings and incredible insults, the Party and the Young Communist League carried on extensive underground work in the rear of the Whites.

9. Lenin and the Common Struggle

The Third Congress of the Young Communist League took place during the period of transition from War Communism to the New Economic Policy. At this Congress on October 2, 1920, Lenin delivered his historic speech on the tasks of the Leagues, and defined the fighting program of Communist education for the growing generation.

The youth must study communism, he said, only then can they truly justify the name of Communist youth. The

youth must build Communist society, and for that, knowledge is necessary. They must know how to unite all this knowledge into something whole, something well-thought out, which will guide them in the varied day to day work.

The youth must "educate itself so that every day in any village or town, it will be able to solve, in a practical way, every task connected with common labour, be it ever so small, ever so simple.

"To be a member of the Young Communist League," said Lenin, "means to arrange things so as to give all your work, all your strength to the common cause.

"The Young Communist League should be the shock group which gives its assistance in all kinds of work, which shows its initiative, its readiness.

"It is necessary for the Young Communist League to combine its education, its studies and its training with the labour of the workers and peasants, in order that it should not become shut up in its schools or merely limit itself to reading Communist books and pamphlets.

"The Young Communist League will only justify its name as the true Communist league of the young generation if at every stage of its studies, its training, its education, it is linked up with the common struggle of all toilers against all exploiters."

The Congress passed a number of important decisions on educational work, on the employment and training of the young workers and on youth in the state organs and trade unions. It passed the program and statutes of the League.

Much time had to be spent in the struggle against unhealthy tendencies within the League. Dunayevsky, who had been rebuffed at the Second Congress, began an anti-Party, factional struggle before the Third Congress, supporting the Trotskyist theory of turning the trade unions into state organs. The Central Committee of the Russian Young Communist League, before the Congress, had to remove three of its members—Dunayevsky, Yakovlev and Polifem—from trade union work, in order to prevent them from carrying on factional activities, and the Central Committee of the Party had to exclude Dunayevsky from the Party for six months.

The "Ukrainian opposition" (the "classoviki") which had worked with Dunayevsky put forward a series of incorrect and politically harmful proposals. This anarcho-syndicalist deviation present in the Young Communist League in 1920-21, arose in circumstances of extremely complex and intense class struggle. In the main it was analogous to the "workers opposition" in the Party, and expressed the influence of elements hostile to the working class and young workers. The "classoviki" displayed lack of confidence in the Party's political leadership of the Young Communist League. They defended the nationalist proposal that the Ukrainian Young Communist League should be independent of the All-Union organization. The "classoviki" proposed the creation of non-Party groups of young workers around the League nuclei, thus advocating the organizing of a new special type of League. The "classoviki" also demanded the formation of non-Party groups of young peasants. In this they reflected the interests of the kulaks. The proposal arose from underestimation of the revolutionary role of the toiling peasantry, from lack of confidence in the forces of the proletariat, and led to isolating the youth from the general struggle of the proletariat.

With the help and guidance of the Party, the Young Communist League unmasked and crushed the anarcho-syndicalist deviation. The Central Committee of the Party, in a letter sent shortly after the Third Congress, emphasized that the League had taken a big step forward. At the same time the Central Committee noted that the internal work of the League had weakened considerably, as shown by its insufficient participation in "building up the Soviet republic and in assisting the proletarian state."

"In order to help the Russian Young Communist League," said the letter of the Central Committee of the Party dated December 20, 1920, "it is essential first of all to bring into its ranks, not formally (as has been the case up to now), but actually, the

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thousands of young Party members, under the age of 20, who ought to be taking the most active part in all the work of the League. By bringing new Party members into the youth movement, we are strengthening the basic Communist kernel. This moulds the political consciousness of the broad masses of League members, strengthens its leading organs, brings iron Party discipline into its ranks, strengthens the link between the Party and the League, and thus destroys that 'League patriotism' not unknown amongst certain workers in the youth movement. Party organizations should send a certain number of Party members of suitable age into the League, relieving them at the same time of all other work."

10. *Reconstruction Brings New Tasks*

The complete victory on all fronts of civil war and intervention and the transition to peaceful construction and the New Economic Policy raised several new and complex tasks before the League.

During this period the Fourth All-Russian Congress of the Russian Young Communist League was called in Moscow in September 1921. The resolution on the internal and foreign situation of the Soviet Republic endorsed the line of economic policy adopted by the Tenth Congress of the Party (March 1921) as the only possible one leading to the victory of the proletariat. "The Congress considers it essential for the Russian Young Communist League and the broad masses of the proletariat and peasantry to take an energetic part in the work of consolidating and building up large-scale socialist industry and of developing agriculture and all the productive forces of the land."

Decisions were taken to guarantee work for adolescents in industry, to increase the proletarian element of the League, and to improve its educational work. On work in the village, the Congress drew attention to the need for concentrating attention upon "strengthening the existing nuclei, by trying to convert them into strong units and extending them by bringing in the poorest elements and farm labourers."

The Congress noted that only by closely linking the League work with the broad masses of young workers and by raising the communist consciousness of its members, would the Young Communist League become a truly Communist organization of young workers.

The Eleventh Congress of the Party, held in March—April 1922, took several important decisions on the work of the Russian Young Communist League. The Congress emphasized that:

“The Russian Young Communist League, being a mass organization for Communist education, serves the Party as a mighty weapon of Communist education and influence on the broad strata of young workers and peasants. At the same time, the Young Communist League, training within its ranks the most class-conscious and revolutionary part of the working youth, guarantees healthy and uninterrupted growth of the Party from the most active strata of the proletariat—the young workers who come to the Party through the League already trained for practical revolutionary work.”

The decisions of the Eleventh Party Congress gave a clear line and practical instructions on the reorganization of League work:

- “a) To guarantee places in industry for a normal percentage of adolescents;
- “b) To guarantee the necessary conditions for carrying through all measures for the protection of labour by regulating tariffs so as to ensure that adolescents get the full eight-hour day wage for their curtailed working day, and that their conditions of labour be controlled both in state and in private industry.
- “c) To reorganize the labour of young workers so as to subordinate it to further training and qualification; to build schools for young workers which will combine practical training for industry with theoretical and general political education.”

The entire work of the Fifth Congress of the Young Communist League (October 11-19, 1922) was devoted to ways and means of realizing these Party decisions.

The chief questions at the Congress were those of the Communist education of the growing generation and the strengthening of the Young Communist organizations in

rural districts. The rapprochement week between the Party and the League held in the middle of 1922, played an important part in developing the work of the League and in drawing considerably more attention to the League from the Party organizations.

The Fifth Congress in its decisions gave directives for the organization of Marxist courses and cultural and educational work in the League. Much attention was paid to the factory schools, and the question of consolidating them raised. These schools have since grown and developed year by year.

In 1921 there were only 43 schools of this kind, with 2,000 students, but by the Eighth Congress of the Young Communist League in 1928, there were 2,428 schools with 244,400 students, and by January 1, 1933, 975,000 students were being trained in these schools. For developing socialist construction in rural districts, the Fifth Congress proposed for the first time, the organization of mass schools for young peasants. The work of the League in further developing schools for the youth in the collective farms has since grown immeasurably.

As regards work in rural districts in general, the Fifth Congress took as its basis the decisions of the Eleventh Congress of the Party, and defined the tasks of the League in the following way:

"In rural districts, the organizations of the Young Communist League should be the bulwark of the Party and the Soviet government. The main tasks of the Young Communist League in the rural districts are to increase the work among the poorest sections of the villagers with a view to safeguarding them from the ideological influences of the kulaks; to draw the young peasants into the social life of the village, and to satisfy their cultural requirements."

The decisions of the Fifth Congress on the children's Communist movement laid the foundations of a sound system of Leninist education for the rising generation of toilers.

At the Fifth Congress, the Young Communist League took patronage over the Red Navy. In its appeal, the Congress called upon "all Young Communists and all the toiling youth to give daily assistance to the Red Navy, to establish close connections with the sailors, to help their families, to arrange collections and subscriptions and to propagate the idea of building up a mighty Red Navy."

"The best Young Communist League organizations will be those," runs the appeal, "which can contribute most to the cause of helping the Red eagles of our seas. The Young Communists and Red sailors under a common banner are working for the same cause: the building up of the Soviet republic. . . ."

Lenin sent his greetings to the Fifth Congress. They were the last that Vladimir Ilyich gave to the Young Communist League. He wrote:

"Dear friends: I very much regret that I am unable to greet you in person. I wish every success to the work of your Fifth Congress. I am sure that the youth will be able to develop so successfully that when the next moment of world revolution is ripe, they will rise to the occasion."

The discussion of the work of the Young Communist League at the Eleventh Party Congress, and again at the Twelfth Party Congress in Moscow in April 1923, shows the great part the Party plays in leading the life and work of the Young Communist League. Speaking at the Twelfth Party Congress, Comrade Stalin referred to the Young Communist League as one of the driving belts connecting the Party with the working class, and emphasized the colossal importance of work among the youth. In the resolution on the work of the League, the Twelfth Congress noted that, thanks to the very considerable economic and political education carried on, the League was able to cope with the crisis, to bring into its ranks tens of thousands of new young workers, and to strengthen the basic proletarian element of its organization. The Congress pointed out that

"... the Party is now faced with the task of handing on to the new generation all the experiences of revolutionary struggle and of carefully acquainting it with the past history of the Party."

11. *The League Rejects Trotskyism*

Lenin died on January 21, 1924. The working class and the toilers rallied closer around the Leninist Party. Hundreds of thousands of workers joined the Party to continue the work of Lenin under the guidance of the Leninist Central Committee. The Plenum of the Central Committee of January 29-31, 1924, in its resolution on "the acceptance into the Party of workers from the bench," pointed out the special need to bring young workers into the Party.

During the years of the restoration period, the Young Communist League, guided by the Party, held its own in a fierce struggle against Trotskyism. The Party discussion at the end of 1923 and beginning of 1924, when Trotskyism came out against the Party and the Leninist leadership of the Central Committee, was the first big political test for the Young Communist League under the conditions of the New Economic Policy. The League fought vigorously against the Trotskyist opposition's attempt to put the young Party cadres in opposition to the main cadres of the Party and its Central Committee. Instead of teaching the youth that the criterion of the Party should be its fundamental proletarian kernel, its Communist workers from the bench, the Trotskyists tried to prove that the young students were the Party's "barometer."

The Party relentlessly repulsed the Trotskyist opposition.

The hopes held out by the opposition in connection with the Young Communist League were not justified. The League unanimously rejected the opposition, and the opportunist theory of neutrality manifested in sep-

arate links of the League was condemned most determinedly.

The Thirteenth Congress of the Party (May, 1924) sharply raised the question of handing on to the young cadres all the experience and traditions of Bolshevism.

"It is essential that the systematic study of the history of the Party, its program and tactics, its organizational principles and the whole of the ideological inheritance left to the Party by Comrade Lenin, should be organized. In particular the struggle of the Party against opportunism should be made clear since it is in this that our Party has grown and become steeled. The theory of 'neutrality' in the struggle against deviations in the Party is therefore worthless."

Just before the Thirteenth Party Congress a meeting was held under the auspices of the Central Committee of the Party to discuss work among the youth. Comrade Stalin explained at this meeting several contradictions in the work of the Young Communist League and laid down its main line of development.

In reply to the question as to whether the League is the reserve or the instrument of the Party, Comrade Stalin declared:

"The Young Communist League is a reserve, the reserve of young peasants and workers from which the Party is reinforced. But it is at the same time an instrument, an instrument in the hands of the Party, which brings the masses of the youth under the influence of the Party. . . . The League is the instrument of the Party, the auxiliary weapon of the Party, in the sense that the active composition of the Young Communist League is the instrument of the Party for influencing the youth outside the League."

On the question of the work of the League in rural districts Comrade Stalin emphasized that "the League should both strengthen and extend its influence in rural districts."

The Young Communist League "should be both a workers' and a peasants' league. . . . Without the peasantry, without the young peasant masses, it will cease to be a workers' and peasants' league. But everything

should be organized so that the leading role remains in the hands of the proletarian elements."

At the Thirteenth Party Congress a report was made on the work of the League. A resolution was passed outlining its great successes and the importance of Communist work among the youth.

The resolution emphasized that it is the chief task of the Young Communist League to raise the social and political activity of the whole League and of all its members. The Congress stressed the special importance of having League organizations in rural districts. In the resolution on the press, the Congress declared the need for an All-Union League newspaper.

The Sixth Congress of the Young Communist League held July 12-18, 1924, took these directives of the Thirteenth Party Congress as the basis of all its work.

12. *Change of Name and the Turn to the Village*

The Sixth League Congress passed a resolution to rename the League, calling it the *Leninist* Young Communist League.

The decision runs as follows:

"We have taken this decision not merely for the sake of words, nor from a desire to bear the best of all names; nor yet only out of respect for the memory of the great departed. We have taken it so that all the toiling youth of the peoples inhabiting the U.S.S.R., together with their vanguard the Young Communist League, should be imbued with singleness of purpose and strong determination to learn, in the Leninist way, to live, to work and to fight for the realization of the work entrusted to us by Lenin. . . .

"The three main tasks facing the members of the Leninist Young Communist League today are: to bring along in their train all the toiling youth of town and village; to benefit by the Bolshevik experience of the old Party guard and to follow resolutely in its footsteps; to be really internationalist and bolshevize the whole of the Young Communist International."

The growth and progress of the economy of the Soviet Union brought about considerable activity among the

young workers and peasants, and a big increase both of the membership and political importance of the League.

The resolution on the report made by the Central Committee to the Sixth Congress of the Young Communist League emphasized that:

"The main result of the past period, with its growth and consolidation of the basic proletarian elements and increase in the age-limit for membership, is the indubitable strengthening of the Bolshevik, Leninist spirit inside the League, and the recognition by the League of the leading role and tasks of our Party. It is just during this period, during the process of strengthening its political activity and testing its leading cadres on the experiences of the recent Party discussion, that the League has been able to show its Bolshevik outlook and to eliminate all waverings in its ranks. The Congress warmly greets the Central Committee of the Leninist Young Communist League for the stand it took during the Party discussion, considering that it expressed the will and thoughts of the whole mass of League members, when it firmly and determinedly supported the old Bolshevik element of the Party, when it condemned the activities of the Party opposition, when it determinedly rejected the 'theory of neutrality.' The Congress considers that the Central Committee acted correctly when it condemned all neutrality in the struggle against anti-Leninist deviations, and tried to realize the inherited revolutionary traditions shared by the old and young guard of the Party.

"The Congress notes, moreover, that side by side with the general rapprochement between the League and the Party, there has taken place a constant strengthening of the guidance given by the Central Committee of the Party to the League. The Central Committee of the Party has devoted considerable attention to the youth, has responded sympathetically to all questions facing the youth movement, has helped the youth to understand the most complex problems arising out of the growth of the League, and has helped, by its decisions and directives, to make possible all the successes which the League has achieved."

By the Sixth Congress, there were 700,000 members of the League. The Congress made several most important decisions on the employment of the youth and the economic work of the League; on the current problems of the League in the rural districts and schools for young peasants. The Congress paid considerable attention to the tasks of Communist education for children and the work of the League in the Red Army and Navy.

The speech delivered by Comrade Stalin on April 6, 1925 in the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. on "the Y.C.L. *actives* in the village," was of great importance for the further work of the League. Comrade Stalin once more emphasized the main task in the village—to maintain the proletarian kernel of the League as the fundamental guiding force, to put the active forces of this kernel to work in the chief districts of the Soviet Union and to educate the young active elements of the rural districts in the spirit of safeguarding the proletarian policy.

Comrade Stalin dwelt in particular on the last question. In his definition of the chief means of correctly educating these young Communist active elements, he stressed the need:

"... for the Young Communist active elements in the villages to be supplied with popular pamphlets on agricultural taxation, the local budget, the financial situation of the country. . . ."

The Young Communist should be in a position:

"... to explain to the peasantry the policy of the Party and of the Soviet government in rural districts, so as to ensure that this policy is put into operation honestly and conscientiously."

"It is essential for the Young Communist to be supplied with popular pamphlets on the alliance between the workers and peasants, the meaning and importance of this alliance, on proletarian dictatorship, the foundations of Communism and finally, on the history of the October Revolution and the life of the peasantry under the tsar and landlord; their life today, and how they will live when the *smychka** has become stronger and socialism taken root. . . . With these tasks in view, and by carrying them out in the course of the daily work, there will be no need to fear the dangers which face the Young Communist League in rural districts."

13. "*Every Member Active in Socialist Construction*"

The Seventh Congress of the Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union took place in March 1926 under circumstances of the stormy economic growth of the Soviet Union and of enormous growth in the

* *Smychka*, bond between workers and peasants.

political activity of the broad masses of workers and peasants.

The Seventh Congress met after the Fourteenth Congress of the Party, which decided upon industrializing the U.S.S.R., converting it from an agrarian into an industrial country, independent of foreign countries. The Party Congress unanimously condemned the so-called "Leningrad opposition," which adopted an anti-Leninist, Trotskyist position on the main questions of socialist construction.

The "Leningrad opposition" rejected the Leninist theory of the possibility of building socialism in a single country, underestimated the middle peasant as an ally of the working class, thus objectively undermining the proletarian dictatorship, and defended the Menshevik thesis that our socialist industry is state capitalism. It insisted upon freedom of factions and groupings within the Party and tried to set the Leningrad organization against the whole Party. The Fourteenth Congress exposed and condemned the anti-Party line taken by the leaders of the "Leningrad opposition"—Zinoviev and Kamenev.

The Trotskyist-Zinoviev opposition was also reflected in the Young Communist League, particularly in the proposal to create delegate meetings of young peasants.

In reply to the question posed by the Editorial Board of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (October 24, 1925), Comrade Stalin defined the essence of the proposal for delegate meetings as follows:

"Firstly, because it harbours a sort of dread of the middle peasants, striving to keep the young middle peasants at a distance, an attempt to wash one's hands of them. Is such a striving correct? Of course not. We must not repel the young middle peasants, but bring them closer to us, bring them closer to the Young Communist League. Only in this way will it be possible to inspire the young middle peasants with confidence in the workers, confidence in the proletarian core of the Young Communist League, confidence in our Party.

"In the second place, there can be no doubt that in the present conditions of the revival of all groups of the peasantry, separate delegate meetings of the young middle peasants attached to the Young Communist League would inevitably become transformed into a separate league of young middle peasants. Moreover such a separate league would necessarily be led to set itself in opposition to the existing Young Communist League and to its leader—the Russian Communist Party; it would attract to itself the peasant section of the Young Communist League and thus create the danger of the Young Communist League splitting into two leagues—into a league of young workers and a league of young peasants. Can we afford to ignore such a danger? Of course, we cannot. Is there any need for such a split, especially at the present juncture, especially under the existing conditions of our development? Of course not. On the contrary, what we need today, is not to repel the young peasants, but to bring them closer to the proletarian core of the Young Communist League, not discord but a firm alliance between them."

The Seventh League Congress most rigorously condemned the proposals of the Trotskyist-Zinoviev opposition and approved the firm, consistent line adopted by the Central Committee in the struggle against anti-Leninist deviations in the Party and the League.

The Congress declared that "in the future also, the Central Committee and the whole of the League, under the guidance of the Party, should offer the most determined resistance to all deviations and distortions of Leninism."

By the Seventh Congress, the Young Communist League had about 50 per cent of the young workers in its ranks. The League began working on a broad scale to win influence among the youth of the poor peasants, the farm labourers and middle peasants. It threw itself into all branches of socialist construction, became an active participant in the work of the soviets, the trade unions, the co-operatives and the voluntary societies. No mean achievements were gained by the League in educational work, especially in the sphere of political education. The Young Communist press was developing.

Since the Sixth Congress the membership of the

League had increased by a million, making a total of 1,750,000. This necessitated further strengthening of the political education within its ranks.

A Young Communist League member must be an active participant in socialist construction—that was how the main task was formulated by the Congress. As this could only be accomplished by acquiring the necessary knowledge and by mastering the revolutionary theory of Marx, Lenin and Stalin, the Congress took a number of practical decisions to provide the young workers with evening schools, craft and technical courses, and so on. At the same time it discussed methods of drawing the young workers further into industrial life, and the work of production conferences; of increasing industrial discipline and the part played by the youth in social, Soviet, co-operative and trade union work; and of drawing in the toiling youth of town and village so as to train it in this work.

These tasks arose out of the Party's policy on the relations between proletariat and peasantry. The Fourteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. defined this policy as follows:

"If the poor peasants and, primarily, the farm labourers, are the main prop of the proletariat in rural districts, the middle peasant is, and should be, its stable ally. . . . With the growing economic guidance shown by socialist state industry and with the state credit institutions and other key positions in the hands of the proletariat, the main body of the peasantry should be drawn into co-operative organizations which should be guaranteed socialist development, using, overcoming and squeezing out the capitalist elements. This is the way construction can be achieved in the rural districts. Therefore any under-estimation of the middle peasant, any failure to understand the exclusive role he plays, any attempt to turn the Party away from the slogan of a stable alliance with him and back to the obsolete slogan of neutralization of the middle peasant, 'fear of the middle peasant,' objectively leads to undermining the proletarian dictatorship, by breaking up the *bloc* between the workers and peasants.

"The fight against the kulaks should be conducted by organizing the poor peasants against them and at the same time by strengthening the alliance of the proletariat and the poor and middle peasants,

by cutting off the middle peasant from the kulaks, so as to isolate the latter." (From the resolution of the Fourteenth Party Congress on the report of the Central Committee.)

Hence the main task of the Young Communist League was to strengthen the work among the village poor, to increase the Party kernel, to create a group of Young Communist active elements capable of pursuing the Party line in rural districts.

The role of the League among the broad masses of young workers, farm labourers and peasants was becoming ever greater, and its organizations in the national republics had grown considerably by the Seventh Congress. The need for strengthening the work of educating active elements among the national minorities and increasing the international education of the Young Communists was emphasized by the Congress.

14. *The Struggle for the First Five-Year Plan*

Between the Seventh and Eighth Congresses, the work of the Young Communist League went forward and, in the violent struggle against the Trotskyist opposition, the Young Communist generation became steeled and hardened in the fight for the policy of Leninism.

Before the Fifteenth Congress of the Party, the Trotskyist opposition in the League also had been advocating an anti-Leninist platform. They had attacked the Party leadership of the League and accused the League and its leadership of relinquishing the October conquests of the young workers and of conducting an incorrect line in rural districts.

By disorganizing the work of the League, the Trotskyist opposition was trying to establish a faction within the League, to establish as it were a second League, which would carry on conspiratorial work and organize Trotskyist groups. They were especially active in the Moscow, Leningrad, Ukrainian and Georgian organizations.

The destruction of the Trotskyist opposition in the League showed that the League had grown ideologically and politically, that it was undeviatingly struggling for the general line of the Party, showing itself to be a serious aid to the Party in Socialist construction.

The Fifteenth Party Congress which took place December 2-19, 1927 gave directives for drawing up the Five-Year Plan of National Economy and emphasized the great role the Young Communist League was called upon to play in its fulfilment.

The decisions of this Party Congress formed the basis of the work of the Eighth Congress of the Leninist Young Communist League held in May 1928. The League opened its Congress with its ranks closely ranged around the Party and its Leninist Central Committee headed by Comrade Stalin.

The League had proved itself a strong fighter for Leninism, a militant organizer and builder of socialism, full of initiative. It had helped to bring new cadres of young workers into industry and the broad network of factory-workshop apprentice schools, and to raise the material and cultural level of the young workers.

At the Eighth Congress of the League Comrade Stalin, the leader of the Party and of the whole working class, delivered a speech of extreme importance for the future work of the League. He formulated three militant tasks confronting the Young Communist League.

Firstly: "to raise the fighting spirit of the working class against its class enemies. . . . It is essential, however, that this should not be considered as a temporary or transitory task but should permeate all our work as long as there are classes in our country and as long as we are in a capitalist environment."

Secondly: "to struggle relentlessly against bureaucracy, to organize mass criticism, and to embody this criticism in practical decisions for correcting our deficiencies. In rousing the fury of millions against the bureaucratic distortions of our organizations," said Comrade Stalin, "it is sometimes necessary to hurt certain of our comrades who have done good service in the past but who

now suffer from the disease of bureaucracy. But should this hold up our work of organizing control from below? I think it should not and will not. We should sincerely recognize their past services, but at the same time chastise them a little for new mistakes and for bureaucracy."

Thirdly: "to master science, to forge new cadres of Bolshevik specialists for all branches of knowledge, to learn, learn, learn in the most dogged manner.

"There stands before us," continued Comrade Stalin, "a fortress. It is called science, with all its manifold ramifications of knowledge. We must take this fortress at any cost. It must be taken by the youth, if they want to be builders of the new life, if they want to become the true successors of the old guard.

"We must not now limit ourselves to training Communist cadres in general, Bolshevik cadres in general, who are able to talk a little about everything. Dilettantes and know-alls only fetter us now. We want Bolshevik specialists in metallurgy, textiles, fuel, chemistry, agriculture, transport, trade, bookkeeping, and so on."

The entry of the country into the period of reconstruction called for a sharp turn in the League activities and for new forms and methods of work.

With mighty energy the League began to work on the tasks set by the Party and the proletarian state—of the socialist rationalization of industry, the improvement of agriculture, the struggle against bureaucracy and the fight for a new cultural life—by organizing the young workers and peasants for socialist construction. Many Young Communist organizations entered earnestly into the competitions for the best industrial worker, into the rationalization groups, the industrial challenges, inventors' circles and industrial shock brigades.

In his report to the Moscow *active* on the results of the Eighth League Congress, Comrade Kosarev related how the experience of individual organizations had helped in drawing young workers into League activities.

"In certain nuclei the competitions for the best industrial worker and the exposure of the worst absentee were used as a basis for the later creation of rationalization groups, for organizing industrial challenges with other enterprises, for forming inventors' circles, for convening youth meetings according to qualifications, and for bringing the bulk of the Young Communists into the work of the produc-

tion conferences. In this way all the forms of industrial training of the youth were put into operation and one felt that these nuclei had taken the road towards educating organizers and builders of socialist life, who understood how to take general class interest as their starting point and how to combine the personal with the social."

However, the Eighth Congress in its resolution on the report of the Central Committee of the League recognized that the successes achieved in adopting new forms were inadequate. The Central Committee and the leading organs of the League were advised by the Congress to reorganize their methods of work so as to ensure permanent League workers spending at least half their time working in the lower organizations, in the nuclei.

The Congress noted that the Young Communist League was becoming a truly mass organization in the rural districts. This was clearly confirmed by the grain collection campaign, in which the League took an active part. At the same time, during the campaign, cases were disclosed of the village nuclei "trailing along in the tail of events, giving way to the kulaks, acting against the measures proposed by the Party and the Soviet government, and thus being weapons in the hands of the kulaks."

Therefore the tasks of the League in the rural districts consisted in cleansing the League of kulak elements who had wormed their way in, concentrating all the attention of the Young Communists and the non-Party youth on helping the Party in the work of collectivization, determinedly eliminating from economic life the capitalist elements in rural districts.

The Congress devoted considerable attention to, and made special decisions on Communist training for the youth and on the work and education of the working youth in connection with the Five-Year Plan.

15. *The Highest Award to the League*

At the Eighth League Congress the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R., in recognition of its services during the years of Civil War against Kolchak, Denikin and Yudenich, presented the League with the highest fighting award, the symbol of the socialist revolution, the Order of the Red Banner. The League responded by declaring:

"We solemnly promise the Soviet Government to participate wholeheartedly in all its undertakings and in all its work. In the field and in the factory, in the Red Army barrack and at the shop counter, we will carry out our small tasks, remembering that they are part of that great cause, the building of socialism."

The Young Communist League is honourably keeping this pledge. Its patronage of the Red Navy and Air Force of the Soviet Union has been and still is of great importance in strengthening the military might of the proletarian state.

At the time of the Ninth League Congress the Red Navy in which there was 55 per cent of workers had 45 per cent of Party and League members. By the Seventh Conference Party and League members constituted 68 per cent of the workers and 23 per cent of the collective farmers among the Red Sailors 60 per cent of the junior commanders and 71 per cent of the senior commanders.

The Ninth Congress (January 16-26, 1931) passed the following resolution on military work:

"The Congress considers that the scope and character of the military work in the Young Communist League does not correspond either to the present requirements for defence of the country or to the new technical equipment of the workers' and peasants' Red Army. It therefore demands immediate compulsory military training for all Young Communists, and that every Young Communist, while mastering a minimum of general military knowledge, must also master completely one branch of special, mainly technical, knowledge. There must be no room in the League for those who underestimate the need for military training and those who do not carry on military work from day to day."

Further, we find the following in the decisions of the Seventh League Conference.

"It is the first duty of every Young Communist organization and of every Young Communist to be ready at any moment to rise in defence of the first proletarian state in the world."

16. *On the Front of Socialist Construction*

All the work of the Young Communist League between the Eighth and Ninth Congresses conformed to the tasks of reconstruction. In the main it had overcome the lag between its rate of development, forms and methods of work and the rate of development of socialist construction. Questions of economic construction and of the socialist reconstruction of the national economy had become the backbone of the work of the Young Communist organizations.

The main tasks which determined its work were set by the Fifteenth Party Congress, which pointed out that:

"The Young Communist League should be the initiator and executor of the new undertakings in town and village in connection with rationalization of economy, labour and life in general. The Young Communist League should be one of the Party's chief assistants in carrying out its policy of struggle against technical, economic and cultural backwardness. It should be the main lever in re-educating the proletarian youth and the youth among the poor and middle peasantry in the spirit of socialist construction and for defence against all enemies both within and without the country."

The new ventures, initiative and independence of many Young Communist League nuclei contributed largely to the store of experience of the League and was the embryo of socialist competition.

All the measures adopted by the League—shock brigades, competitions for the best industrial workers, reviews of departments and workshops, competition between departments and separate enterprises, industrial exhibitions, rationalization meetings, campaigns to master

technique, and so on—afforded enormous assistance to the Party in its work of raising the productivity of labour, improving the quality of production, lowering the cost of production and eliminating waste.

All this prepared the way for the organization of mass socialist competition. This great movement, begun on the initiative of the Young Communist League, developed into the general competition which later took place among all workers and which guaranteed the final fulfilment of the Five-Year Plan in four years.

It required considerable forces to build the new industrial giants and to reconstruct the old factories, mines and mills. The League despatched thousands of its best members to help on urgent construction work. For example, they rendered invaluable assistance to the building of the Stalingrad works, for which seven thousand Young Communists were mobilized. Ten thousand were sent to the mines and quarries of the Donets Basin and forty-five thousand to the lumber camps. In all, not less than one hundred fifty thousand Young Communists were mobilized for construction. Today, thousands of them are mobilized for work on the Moscow underground railway.

The socialist reconstruction of agriculture called for reorganizing the work of the village organizations of the League. The Fifteenth Party Congress in its resolutions noted that:

“The Young Communist organizations are playing a most important role in the village and now they should endeavour to strengthen the core of poor peasants and farm labourers in their membership, educate the new cadres of active Young Communists from among them, follow the Party line more closely, give active assistance to the Party in organizing the poor peasants and farm labourers and give political education to their members. The Young Communist organizations in rural districts should serve as the Party’s most powerful lever in improving and collectivizing agriculture, in developing broad cultural initiative and in training new cadres of socialist workers.”

This decision did not meet with adequate response until 1929, when a big change was to be seen in the growth of initiative among village Young Communist organizations. There followed the mass Young Communist campaign for the harvest and collectivization of agriculture, which mobilized the broad masses of the youth among the poor and middle peasants for carrying out the tasks set by the Party. The League forces organized over five thousand collective farms. The work of spreading agronomical knowledge was widely developed and it was on their initiative that up to a million tons of seed were treated with a mordant, and so on.

During the years of the First Five-Year Plan, the Young Communist League in the rural districts became considerably strengthened. It grew politically, and became steeled in the struggle for the socialist reconstruction of agriculture and the strengthening of the alliance between the proletariat and the poor and middle peasantry for the victory of the collective farms and the liquidation of the kulaks as a class.

It was in the course of this struggle that the Young Communist League discovered that certain of its organizations in rural districts were infected by socially hostile elements. These elements having gained leadership, retarded the fulfilment of measures proposed by the Party and advocated Right opportunist "theories" of the peaceful growing of the kulak into socialism and re-educating the kulak youth in the ranks of the Young Communist League. These degenerate elements were expelled from the League.

On the initiative of the Young Communist League, twenty thousand Young Communists were mobilized in the rural districts to work as bookkeepers. The Central Committee of the League carried out the mobilization of five hundred of its leading workers for permanent work in its rural organizations.

During the period between the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Party Congresses, the Party carried on a struggle for rapid industrial development, having already created the basis of the socialist reconstruction of the national economy. These mighty successes were achieved thanks to the firm carrying out of its general line, "thanks to the relentless and determined struggle on two fronts—against Trotskyism and against the Right deviation as the main danger at the present stage and against the conciliatory attitude." (Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U.)

The Sixteenth Party Congress held in July 1930, determined the road to be taken for a widespread socialist offensive. In its resolution on the Central Committee's report, the Congress instructed the Central Committee of the Party "to continue to guarantee militant Bolshevik rates of development of socialist construction, to secure the true fulfilment of the Five-Year Plan in four years, and to pursue unwaveringly the policy of liquidating the kulaks as a class by all-round collectivization throughout the Soviet Union."

The Congress noted the great achievements of the Young Communist League in popularizing socialist competition and shock brigading, and in its work amongst youth in industry.

After the Sixteenth Party Congress "the Young Communist League and the whole of the working class launched an unprecedented struggle for a higher rate of development, while fighting to realize the decisions of the Party Congress. The Young Communist League was not behind in this struggle. . . ." (Kaganovich.)

By its Ninth Congress (January 1931) the League had become an army three million strong, with two years experience of struggle for fulfilment of the First Five-Year Plan.

In his *Political Report to the Sixteenth Party Congress*,

Comrade Stalin defined the role of the Young Communist League in socialist competition as follows:

"Furthermore, the Party organized wide socialist *competition* and roused mass *labour enthusiasm* in the factories and workshops. *The Manifesto of the Sixteenth Party Conference on Socialist Competition* put matters on the right track. The shock brigades are pushing them further. The Leninist Young Communist League and the working class youth under its leadership are crowning the cause of competition and the shock brigades with decisive successes. It must be admitted that our revolutionary youth play an exceptional part in this campaign."*

Having heard the report of Comrade Kaganovich on the international and internal situation and the tasks of the Young Communist League, the Ninth League Congress gave the Party "a firm, unwavering promise to continue as its chief assistant in the relentless struggle for the purity of the Leninist general line, for the unity and iron solidarity of the ranks of the C.P.S.U., against all opportunist attempts, against all the manoeuvrings of kulak agents, against all elements of conciliation. . . . under the guidance of the Party to develop still more widely the mighty weapon in the struggle for the Five-Year Plan in four years, that of socialist competition and shock-brigade work."

The class fighting spirit and the political development of the League was the outcome of the correct Party leadership in the determined struggle on two fronts, against Right and "Left" opportunism in its own ranks and those of the Party.

"The Ninth Congress notes with satisfaction the determined struggle of the Central Committee against the Right opportunist theory of 're-educating the kulak youth in the ranks of the Young Communist League.' This theory, which has grown out of the Right opportunist theory of the 'peaceful development of the kulak towards socialism,' is leading to the belittling of the League, to lowering its class fighting capacity, to denying the role of the farm labourer, the collective farmer and the poor peasantry. . . .

* Stalin, *Leninism*, Vol. II, pages 302-3.

"The line adopted by the Rights," said Comrade Kosarev at the Congress, "means the refusal to inflame class feeling among the youth, the refusal to encourage their hatred of the class enemy. It means the glossing over of this struggle and cultivation of a desire to live peaceably with everybody. It is no accident that out of this we get the theory of re-educating the young kulak. Their arguments are approximately of this kind:

"You are young people, and you will find yourselves living under socialism; you will have to build Communism; so let the adults get on with the class struggle. You must mitigate the class struggle, gloss it over; young people should live together in peace."

The Congress further determinedly condemned the "Leftist" activities of those (Shatskin, Stein) who, following in the footsteps of Trotsky, were trying to set the Young Communist League in opposition to the Party, who wanted to revise the Party leadership in the League and to undermine the authority of the old Bolshevik guard. These rotten Trotskyist ideas had already been smashed once by the Party, and now they were smashed again.

The Congress recognized the political line of its Central Committee as fully correct; it approved its work and specially emphasized the need for more extensive and active participation in the concrete questions of socialist construction—mastering the new technique, introducing planning and rationalization, and conducting socialist competition and shock brigade work.

On the report on the organization of the collective farm movement and the tasks of the Young Communist League in rural districts, the Congress noted that "the loyalty to socialism of the Young Communist in rural districts is measured first and foremost by his joining the collective farm and by his active work to consolidate the collective farm."

A special question discussed at the Ninth Congress was work among children. The Young Communist League had already done considerable work in organizing the children's communist movement. The Pioneer organization which had 4,000 members in 1922, had grown, by 1933

into an army of 5,810,543 young Leninists, and 2,082,080 Octobrists.

However, this growth had not been sufficiently guarded and strengthened by educational work. The decisions of the Ninth Congress emphasized that the League organizations should insure a real turn towards improving the communist education of children.

"This," reads the resolution, "should first of all take the line of drawing the Pioneers and all children into the general activities of the Young Communist League nuclei by means of suitable methods of work. This can only be done if the Pioneer movement is guaranteed the necessary cadres, further development of its activity, creative initiative, and a determined struggle against incorrect methods of leadership which convert the organization into one run for children instead of by the children themselves."

The Pioneer organizations should be the first in the struggle for good quality education, the first to master the fundamentals of science; always remembering

"... that the struggle for knowledge, the struggle to master the fundamentals of science is part of the common struggle of the working class and a most important section of that struggle upon which the Pioneer should display his readiness to fight for the cause of Lenin." (See the decisions of the Seventh League Conference.)

17. *Spread of Internationalism*

The Sixth Party Congress (August 1917) resolved that the Party should strive "to ensure that the future socialist league of young workers of Russia should be affiliated from birth to the Youth International". In their greetings to Karl Liebknecht at the First League Congress, the young workers declared that "the time is now not far off when the toiling youth of all countries will unite in one Communist Youth International."

Formation of the Young Communist International discussed at the First Congress was carried out one year later. The Central Committee of the Russian Young Com-

munist League did considerable preparatory work for convening the Young Communist International Congress and established contact with revolutionary youth organizations abroad.

The First Congress of the Young Communist International was held illegally in Berlin. There were nineteen delegates present representing 219,000 members of socialist and communist youth organizations.

The Russian Young Communist League, which from the formation of the Young Communist International has been its leading section and an example for the international youth movement, is educating its members in the spirit of international solidarity and proletarian struggle. As its leading section, the Leninist Young Communist League has always carried on an active struggle to bolshevize the Young Communist International and takes the most active part in its work, giving Bolshevik guidance, calling upon the young proletarians of all countries to fight determinedly for communism and assisting in a Bolshevik manner the fight against all kinds of attempts to separate the struggle of the youth from that of the working class as a whole.

Speaking at the Anniversary Plenum October 29, 1933, devoted to the fifteenth anniversary of the Leninist Young Communist League, Comrade Kaganovich said:

"In some countries the bourgeoisie is trying to imitate our methods of organizing the youth by setting up their own fascist youth leagues. The youth of the bourgeoisie are recruited into these leagues together with the bourgeois-landlord youth, and the backward and deceived strata of the petty-bourgeois and working youth.

"But inside these leagues, the class nature of the work is in irreconcilable contradiction with the composition of a considerable section of the misled youth.

"Consequently, these leagues are maintained by blinding the class consciousness of the youth, by preventing them from realizing their own power as a class. It is clear that there is no future for the youth in these leagues as they are based at present. The position in the Young Communist Leagues is diametrically opposed

to this. Here the class nature and the class tasks to be undertaken fully coincide with the composition of the organization. Here the main task is to help the youth to discover themselves, to learn to understand themselves as a class. Our youth have the future before them, for the proletariat holds the future in its hands."

In reply to questions put by the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in 1925, Comrade Stalin said:

"Internationalism is the fundamental idea that permeates the activity of the Young Communist League. Therein lies its strength. Therein lies its might. The spirit of internationalism must always hover over the Young Communist League."

The Young Communist of the Soviet Union never forgets that the successes of the Leninist Young Communist League in all spheres of construction of the socialist state, and the participation of broad strata of workers and young peasants in this work, are also the successes of the international Young Communist Leagues.

Comrade Stalin has said that

"Our workers' state is the offspring of the international proletariat, it is the base for the development of the revolution in all countries, the final victory of our revolution is the business of the international proletariat."

Therefore the task of every member of the Young Communist League is to deepen still more the feeling of responsibility for the work of the Young Communist International, to display more initiative in developing international work, to strengthen and increase the contacts which exist among the fraternal sections abroad, to increase its activity in the further struggle for the building of the classless, socialist society in the U.S.S.R.

Under the guidance of the C.P.S.U., the Young Communist League has roused the whole of the youth of the U.S.S.R. to take an active part in the common struggle of the proletariat to destroy the very foundations of the old exploiting world and build the new Communist world, in which labour is a matter of honour and valour, and life is beautiful and free.

The life of the working youth in capitalist countries is slavery and oppression, misery and hunger.

Capitalism means poverty for ever increasing millions of young working men and women.

18. *The Happiest Generation in the World*

The successful achievement of the First Five-Year Plan in four years greatly increased the importance of the Young Communist League and the working youth in the industry and agriculture of the U.S.S.R. In his report to the Seventh All-Union Conference of the League, Comrade Kosarev noted that

"We can put on record colossal achievements in drawing the rising generation into industry. Out of the total composition of the nation's workers, numbering in all about 19,000,000 persons (besides the machine and tractor stations and the farm labourers), 6,366,000 are under twenty-three years of age, or 33 per cent of the total number of workers. Of the workers in industry, 40.3 per cent are young workers under twenty-three years of age. In separate branches of industry, in the most important branches, the young workers are a decisive force in the fulfilment of the industrial and financial plan."

In the fulfilment of the main task of the Five-Year Plan—the organization of an advanced technical base inside the country for the socialist reconstruction of the whole of the national economy, the Young Communist League proved itself to be the militant aid of the Party. It became the school of manifold activities of the state, and the shock brigades of socialist construction.

However, the Young Communists are by no means satisfied with these successes.

The worth of every member of the League is tested today by the way in which he struggles to improve the quality of production, to increase the productivity of labour, to increase the harvest and to improve the quality of work in agriculture, to enforce socialist labour disci-

pline, to strengthen the feeling of responsibility for socialized property.

Having entered the sixteenth year of its work, the Leninist Young Communist League of the Land of the Soviets is now faced with the task of fulfilling the highly responsible and honourable obligations which it took upon itself at the fifteenth anniversary of its foundation.

It has to mobilize broad masses of young workers, collective farmers, and peasants to help fulfil these tasks.

The first task is *to master technique in a Bolshevik manner.*

As Comrade Stalin said: "*Fervour* for new construction . . . we must supplement this with enthusiasm and *fervour* for *mastering* the new factories, the new technique. . . ."

In order to master the new factories, the new technique, every League organization and every Young Communist is required to show the same energy and Bolshevik persistence as was shown by Young Communists in the construction of Magnitogorsk, the Stalingrad Tractor Plant and Dnieprostroi. The whole Young Communist League must learn from these heroic examples how to master technique and industrial knowledge in a Bolshevik manner.

"By our fifteenth anniversary we intend holding a socialist examination, in connection with mastering the set minimum of technical knowledge by Young Communists, with the help of engineers, technicians and old workers and foremen. It will be a great public examination during which every Young Communist, as an advanced member of our youth, will publicly report his successes in mastering the technical minimum, the technique of his work, and how he has come to understand his own machine and the industrial process." (Kosarev.)

Many organizations have followed the example set by the Young Communists of the Ural Machine Construction Works in holding an examination of a social and technical character.

By entering into this examination, the Young Communist organizations draw the masses of young workers and collective farmers into the struggle to master technique.

The League strives to organize its work so that the young worker becomes familiar with all branches of industrial and technical knowledge. Speaking at the Plenary Session of the Leningrad *oblast* committee, Comrade Kosarev said:

"In our age of proletarian revolution, in the age of chemistry, electricity and aviation, the first sign of literacy in a young person educated in the land that is building socialism, should be the understanding of the motor, the ability to drive a car, the knowledge of the first elements of chemistry and electricity."

The second task is to make all collective farms Bolshevik and every collective farmer well-to-do.

The Young Communists from the Soviet and collective farms make use of the experiences of the town in mastering technique and conducting technical examinations, for every Young Communist working on agricultural machinery should know his tractor, combine, and so on.

Their work in the village is to be the chief assistant of the Party in the struggle for Bolshevik collective farms—and this task is not being sufficiently fulfilled. Not all the Young Communist organizations are bringing together forces which know how to fight well against the enemies of collectivization, who know how to arm the collective farmers for a struggle against idlers, self-seekers and slackers. We need strong Bolshevik organizations—indefatigable, fearless fighters in the collective farms.

In his speech at the First All-Union Congress of Collective Farm Shock Brigade Workers, Comrade Stalin said:

"The youth is our future, our hope, comrades. The youth must take our place, the place of the old ones. It must carry our banner until final victory is achieved. Among the peasants there are not

a few old ones, burdened with the burden of the past, burdened with the habits and the recollections of the old life. Naturally, they are not always able to keep up with the Party, to keep up with the Soviet government. But that cannot be said about our youth. They are free from the burden of the past, and they can more easily assimilate the Leninist teachings. And it is precisely because the youth can more easily assimilate the Leninist teachings that it is their mission to lead the laggards and the waverers. It is true that they lack knowledge. But knowledge is a thing that can be acquired. They have not the knowledge today, but they will have it tomorrow. Hence, the task is to learn and learn again the principles of Leninism. Comrades! League members! Learn the principles of Bolshevism and lead the waverers! Talk less and work more—and your success will be assured.”

The young Communists are mindful of these words of their leader. Their tasks in the rural districts are many: to study Leninism, to work diligently to consolidate the collective farms, to be able to cope with all details of collective farm construction, to fight for labour discipline, to crush the remains of the class enemy, to do away with idleness, to be militant in helping the Party conduct the grain deliveries. To fulfil the decisions of the government and the Party by helping those collective farmers who have no cows to obtain them.

In order to consolidate the work of the Party and the Young Communist League organizations in agriculture, the Party has organized political departments in all machine and tractor stations and on all Soviet farms. The organization of political departments helps to strengthen the political role and economic and organizational work of the machine and tractor stations and of the Soviet farms. All phases of the work and life of the stations and farms, as well as of the collective farms they serve, come under the supervision and control of the Party.

In fulfilling the decision of the Plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission of the C.P.S.U. the League selected its best workers to act as assistants to the chiefs of the political departments. It sent those who had proved themselves worthy, those cap-

able of leading the masses in a Bolshevik manner and able to maintain close contact with them.

These comrades are confronted with the task of ensuring real political and organizational work on a broad scale among the Young Communists and the non-Party youth in the machine and tractor stations, the Soviet farms and collective farms. They must be able to consolidate the Young Communist organizations and make them a strong, tried kernel, loyal to the Party and the Soviet government, capable of organizing the masses for the struggle against property-owning survivals among the peasantry and for the building of the classless, socialist society.

During the fifteen years of its work, the Leninist Young Communist League of the Soviet Union has been a fine political school. From among its ranks a large number of comrades have gone into Party, economic and trade union work. Its organizations have forged a million-strong army of young workers studying in factory schools and have founded schools for the youth of the collective farms. Thousands of Young Communists have been sent to study in technical and other universities and in various scientific research institutions, to be trained as technicians, engineers and scientists. Many of them are already responsible for much creative work; have become leading organizers of industry, inventors and fine pedagogues, raising the new strata of young workers and peasants to the heights of science.

Following these successes, the Young Communist League of the Land of the Soviets must develop still more the great work of educating the youth in the spirit of Leninism.

In his greetings to the League on its fifteenth anniversary, Comrade Stalin wrote:

"Corŕiai greetings to the Leninist Workers' and Peasants' Young Communist League, the organizer of our glorious revolutionary youth, on the day of its fifteenth anniversary.

"I wish it success in the work of educating our youth in the spirit of Leninism, in the spirit of relentless struggle against the enemies of the working class and of the utmost consolidation of international fraternal ties between the toilers of all tongues and races of the world.

"The Young Communist shock brigaders, men and women, have covered themselves with glory during the period of construction of new mills and factories, mines, railways, Soviet and collective farms. Let us hope that the Young Communist shock brigaders will display even greater courage and initiative in mastering new technique in all branches of national economy, in strengthening the defence of our country and in consolidating our army, our navy and air force.

"During the fifteen years of its existence, the Leninist Young Communist League has boldly carried forward the mighty banner of Lenin, successfully mustering to its colours millions of young workers and peasants, both men and women. Let us hope that the Leninist Young Communist League will continue to hold aloft the banner of Lenin and with honour carry it forward to the victorious end of our great struggle, to the final victory of socialism.

"Long live the Leninist Young Communist League.

"Long Live the Central Committee of the Leninist Young Communist League."

The Leninist Young Communist League is now in its seventeenth year and under the guidance of the Party and of its fighting leader, Comrade Stalin, is marching to new victories and achievements on all fronts of socialist construction, culture and well-being. It will strengthen its vigilance against class enemies; it will fight for the general line of the Party, and guard zealously the stability of Leninist principles. It will bear on high the banner of militant internationalism, and thus remain worthy of the honours it has received, the Order of the Red Banner and the Order of the Red Banner of Labour.

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